loud p

MIMI ZEIGER ON DISTRIBUTION

[*Sniffin' Glue*] contained perhaps the single most inspired item of propaganda produced by the subculture—the definitive statement of punk's do-it-yourself philosophy—a diagram showing three finger positions on the neck of a guitar over the caption: Here's one chord, here's two more, now form your own band.

—Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 1987

I sat in the rare book room in the basement of Clark Library on the UCLA campus. It was a brown room: brown tables, brown steel shelves, and gray-brown foam rests for archival materials. On that mid-spring afternoon in 1996, the dome over the Los Angeles basin was a clear and bright. I wore white gloves as I paged through Wallace Berman's *Semina*, the Verifax screed he published from 1955 until 1964. Beatnik Berman hand distributed issues up and down the West Coast; inevitably, some of each edition's 300 copies would find their way east and abroad.

In that subterranean room, sepia photographs bridged decades and black alephs pulsed from the fragile folios that sat in front of me. *Semina* was more mail-art project than publishing venture, and I imagined the individual issues in transit: riding a Kerouacian freight train along the coast or cutting vapor trails across the sky, each copy landing in a reader's mailbox and weaving a net of like-mindedness.

So it wasn't much of a surprise to find myself months later—then years later—sending out one, two, fifty copies of *loud paper* at a time. Mailing labels were addressed to subscribers, architecture bookstores, school libraries, and small-press distribution houses. Each name, written in Sharpie at first and later by Deskjet, posed an opportunity to forge connections. Yes, there is nothing like the romance of fresh ink, but I was also wooed by the question of reach. I still am.

Zines are about distribution. They are about the arcs and networks of substrata commerce, a world where pervasiveness trumps dollars: a *loud paper* is exchanged for a *Thrift Score*, a trade closer in attitude than any bookstore sell-through percentage (the number of copies sold versus shipped). It is an economy of like-mindedness based on readership—readers who become writers, contributors, and broadcasters. I still receive missives from individual readers, but it is the collective readership, this elusive network (neither flash mob nor Facebook fans) that remains powerfully at large.

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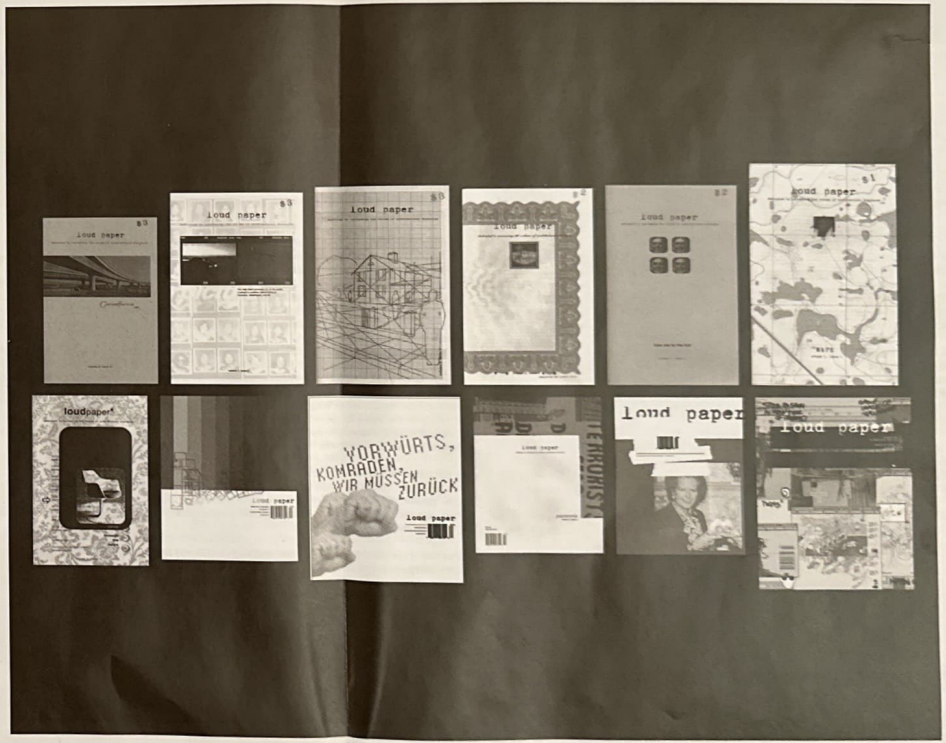
Because of their mouths' similarities, there's a temptation to talk about zines as proto-blogs, to draw analogies between DIY publishing's personalized voices and subjective postings online. This corollary works in terms of content, but zine production and distribution, the very thing that limits print runs and reach, is what ultimately defines the medium. (Even the network is short-lived. I watched as the small-press distribution houses that took copies of *loud paper* disappeared in the early 2000s. Independent architecture bookstores also began to vanish around the same time.) In their heyday, zines were fast, as opposed to books and journals, and loose. Today, that production is so achingly slow as bloggers race ahead, chattering. Today, all print is weighed down by ink and pulp.

Although they are rooted in objectness, these little pamphlets—"memos from the front line," to crib Dick Hebdige on the subculture that was Xeroxed, offset, folded, stapled, and mailed—are cultural dispatches. Each publication reports a selected moment in time; a glance at the independent record labels advertisements in each issue sparks reminiscence. But taken as a whole, they represent a kind of activist space. A free zone for experimentation and expression. This space is indebted to a literal reading of the Deleuzian term *le pli* ("the fold"). The fanzine, with its fold-and-staple craftsmanship, is a space for acting out politics and identity. A guidebook to that space in the late eighties and early nineties was *Factsheet Five*, the quintessential listing of fanzines and a map of DIY culture at the time. A review in the pages of *Factsheet Five*—or, later, the *Zine Guide*—was a piece of alternative acreage.

Like architecture, DIY publishing comes burdened by physicality. In a strange twist of fate, however, it is the distribution network of little magazines that unburdens architecture. When I began *loud paper* in 1996, self-publishing was a stance against the homogeneity of architectural discourse. It was a way of taking back the means of production and a chance for multiple voices to write louder about architecture.

Applied to architectural practice today, a return to self-publishing isn't nostalgic. PDFs and print-on-demand services have replaced grotty photocopies, but the ethos couldn't be timelier. Practice is sinking under global economic woes, design magazine page counts are down (along with their advertising revenues), and the blogosphere—especially when it comes to architecture and design bloggers—has codified into known players. Why not re-evaluate self-publishing today as a provocative architectural space? With online distribution alive and kicking, self-publishing couldn't be easier. Clearly, the profession could benefit from a jolt of snappy discourse. At one time the tools needed for making a zine were glue and an X-Acto knife; now, their digital counterparts are second nature to architects. The time is right for experimental practice and fresh voices. It's time to publish.



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A Few Zines: Dispatches from the Edge of Architectural Production

January 8–February 28, 2009

In the 1990s, zines with architectural and urbanist leanings such as ***Lackluster***, ***Infiltration***, ***loud paper***, ***Dodge City Journal***, and ***Monorail*** subverted traditional trade and academic architecture magazine trends by crossing the built environment with art, music, politics, and pop culture—and by deliberately retaining and cultivating an underground presence. Much has been made of that decade's zine phenomenon—inspiring academic studies, international conferences and DIY workshops—yet little attention has been paid to architecture zine culture specifically, or its resonance within architectural publishing today.

A Few Zines: Dispatches from the Edge of Architectural Production highlights complete runs of several noted zines that began in the nineties and features contemporary publications that continue to draw inspiration from the self-publishing tradition.

A Few Zines: Dispatches from the Edge of Architectural Production
Organized by Gavin Browning, Studio-X
Curator: Mimi Zeiger
Sponsored by Alessi, Bulldog Gin, and IZZE Sparkling Juice

Studio-X
180 Varick Street, Suite 1610, New York, NY 10014
Studio-X is a downtown studio for experimental design and research run by the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation of Columbia University.
January 8–February 28, 2009

Pinkcomma Gallery
81B Wareham Street, Boston, MA 02118
pinkcomma aims to foster and recognize a more creative, youthful, and experimental scene that has grown out of one of the world's most significant capitals of architectural education.
March 6–March 27, 2009

ALESSI
extra ordinary

PUBLICATIONS and PARTICIPANTS

CITIZENS OF NO PLACE
I have always used comics to express myself. The relationship between architectural representation and comics precisely coincides with the relationship between fiction and reality. I am interested in time, space, form, sensibility, attitude, and ultimately, culture. Most of my works are about radical utopian scenarios in cities. Such as Noah's Ark in Space, or the 12-km Tower in Manhattan.

JIMENEZ LAI
Jimenez Lai is currently clinical assistant professor at University of Illinois at Chicago. Previously, Lai has lived and worked in a desert shelter in Taliesin, AZ and resided in a shipping container at Atelier Van Lieshout on the piers of Rotterdam, NL. Lai has received mentions in competitions in Japan, Europe and the US. Professionally, he's worked for Michael Meredith, REX, OMA/Rem Koolhaas in Rotterdam and New York. In February 2006, his Spaceship project was featured on archinect.com and in 2007 he was a recipient of the LeFevre Fellowship. Lai has been an invited juror at the University of Toronto, SCI-Arc, and Syracuse University. His project *Phalanstery Module* opened this past April at Materials & Applications in Los Angeles.

DODGE CITY JOURNAL
From the Publishers, Volume 1, Issue 1:
North American cities are many things: beautiful, dirty, homogeneous, diverse, rich, poor, awe-inspiring, and awful. In our cities we can find evidence of everything that this country has come to mean. A walk through an American city will not allow one to forget this nation's past, nor will it allow one to ignore its future. Within the confines of the American city lie the answers to many of modern society's problems. However, these answers are not cut and dry; they are as complex as the city itself. Each step taken to understanding our cities is a step towards unearthing the answers that lay hidden amongst the concrete, trees, and trash.

ANDREW WAGNER
Andrew Wagner is the editor-in-chief of *American Craft* magazine. Prior to coming to *American Craft* in late 2006, Wagner was the executive editor and founding managing editor of *Dwell* magazine, where he helped push the boundaries of architecture and design journalism, in turn helping to garner the publication the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) General Excellence Award in 2005. In 1997, Wagner founded *LIMN*, the unorthodox design and arts magazine published by the equally unorthodox furniture and design company of the same name, and served as its editor-in-chief until 2000. Wagner was also the founding editor (with Stephanie Ray) of *Dodge City Journal*, a magazine dedicated to documenting life in America's under-explored cities. In addition to his work at *American Craft*, Wagner is a consulting editor at *Places* magazine and has been a guest lecturer at University of California Berkeley, Columbia University, Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), Archeworks, and California College of the Arts. His writing has been published in, amongst others, *Azure*, *Blueprint*, *Breathe*, *loud paper*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Travel and Leisure*.

STEPHEN DUNCOMBE
Panelist Stephen Duncombe teaches the history and politics of media and culture at the Gallatin School of New York University where he is an Associate Professor. He is the author of, among other books, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* and *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*, and the editor of the *Cultural Resistance Reader*. His book on zines has just been re-issued, with a new introduction, by Mircocosm publishers.

FACE B
face b is a cultural and theoretical architectural magazine based in Paris and New York, published twice a year.

face b presents in each issue interviews and essays of renowned and emerging critics, curators, architects, and artists.

face b is a generational project.

face b considers architecture as mass media.

face b is a propaganda tool.

AURÉLIEN GILLIER
Aurélien Gillier is an architecture critic and journalist. He runs PRAAG, a structure on graphic and tactical reflexion in architecture.

BENJAMIN LAFORE
Benjamin Lafore is an architect, co-founder with Sébastien Martinez Barat and David Apheceix of the architecture group La Ville Rayée.

SÉBASTIEN MARTINEZ BARAT
Sébastien Martinez Barat is an architect, co-founder with Benjamin Lafore and David Apheceix of the architecture group La Ville Rayée.

INFILTRATION: THE ZINE ABOUT GOING PLACES YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO GO

Infiltration: the zine about going places you're not supposed to go is a paper publication devoted to the art of urban exploration, a sort of interior tourism that allows the curious-minded to discover behind-the-scenes sights and have a lot of free fun. Several people have given it nice reviews.

Infiltration features editorials, exploring advice and information, articles on recent expeditions, and interviews, all illustrated with maps, pictures, and diagrams. Be forewarned that the zine is black and white and non-glossy. The last issue of *Infiltration* (June 2005, issue 25) focused on military leftovers of all sorts.

NINJALICIOUS
Infiltration founder Jeff Chapman aka Ninjalicious, a well-known Toronto-based urban explorer, passed away in 2005. He was a prominent author and editor for *YIP* magazine. Chapman attended York University in the early 1990s and later studied book and magazine publishing at Centennial College. He went on to serve as Editor at *History* magazine and as Director of the Toronto Architectural Conservancy board.

Chapman first published *Infiltration* in 1996. In total, 25 issues were published—topics included the navigation of storm drains, evading hotel security, and adventuring through abandoned military shelters. He also launched infiltration.org, an online version of the zine, in 1996.

His book, *Access All Areas: A User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration*, was published in July 2005, shortly before his death. The book serves as a how-to-guide to urban exploration—covering topics from basic stealth and concealment, to social engineering techniques to ethics. Chapman is credited with coining the term "credibility prop," which describes a device, uniform, piece of equipment or other appurtenances used solely to reduce suspicion if one is encountered in a normally restricted area.

LACKLUSTER
Lackluster is based in San Francisco.
Lackluster is not the great discoverer.
Lackluster tries to poke deeper.
Lackluster is the mundane ear.

Lackluster's Unfinished Archihorror Issue
A proposed table of contents:

Future Shack
Arcosanti-busters
Not so Hyperreal in Wisconsin
Xanadu, Smart Home of the Future
Buried Alive!
Cave-Dwelling
Living in Mini-Storage
St.Mary's Cathedral
Don Q Inn
Planet of the Apes House
The Bijlmermeer

AMY BALKIN
Amy Balkin is co-editor of *Lackluster*. Her other projects include critical audio tour collaboration *Invisible-5* (invisible5.org), fluctuating atmospheric park *Public Smog* (publicsmog.org), and *This the Public Domain* (thisisthepublicdomain.org), an ongoing attempt to initiate a permanent international public commons on land near Tehachapi, California. She lives and works in San Francisco.

JAMES HARBISON
James Harbison is co-editor of *Lackluster*, a sculptor, and a journalist. Since working on *Lackluster*, he's spent time investigating abandoned smart homes in Florida, prison phone-call monopolies in New York, and the everyday reality of housing for international refugees in Texas. His sculpture exhibits internationally.

LOUD PAPER
loud paper is a zine dedicated to increasing the volume of architectural discourse. It is a slambamgetitoutthere way of linking architectural thoughts, musings, and new work with the culture at large.

loud paper is open to all students, architects, educators, girls about town, dear Johns, and critics as a place for writing loud about architecture and culture.

As the world of architectural publishing is polarized into the camps of professional pragmatism and academic theory, *loud paper* is staunchly neither. It gets inspiration by crossing disciplines and by marching to the pulse of the street. An alternative and collaborative discourse in the arena of architectural thought is at the heart of *loud paper*.

MIMI ZEIGER
Mimi Zeiger founded *loud paper*, an architecture zine and now blog, in 1997. The publication has received grant awards from the Graham Foundation for the Arts and the LEF Foundation.

A Brooklyn-based freelancer, Mimi writes on art, architecture, and design for a variety of magazines including *Dwell*, *Azure*, and *Architect*, where she is a contributing editor. She is author of *New Museums: Contemporary Museum Architecture Around the World* and *Tiny Houses*. Mimi has taught at the California College of the Arts (CCA) and at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc.) Her cross-disciplinary seminars explore the relationships between architecture, art, urban space, and popular culture.

MONORAIL
Monorail is a one-shot spin-off of *Heinous*, a zine focused on oddball pop-culture topics, particularly Evel Knievel. It began as a proposed article about Seattle's monorail, a one-mile relic from the 1962 World's Fair, for Dan Howland's excellent *Journal of Ride Theory*. Yet, as its editor Steve Mandich I researched the subject, the bigger the piece grew, until it made sense to turn it into a zine of its own. Still, Dan provided an introduction and some artwork, and Steve wrote several articles on the Seattle monorail, as well as brief histories of monorails throughout the world. Since its publication, Seattle residents voted to build a citywide monorail system. Sadly, due to financing problems, the project was scrapped.

STEVE MANDICH
Steve Mandich, 39, first appeared in print when his pen/crayon illustration was published in *The Art of Star Wars* (Ballantine, 1979); not until the fanzine explosion of the 1990s did he begin his literary career.

Within the photocopied pages of his self-published zine *Heinous*, Steve examined such pop-culture anomalies as the enigmatic Human Fly, the defunct Seattle Pilots baseball team, the fundamentalist comics of Jack Chick, deadpan legend Bob Newhart, and monorails. *Heinous* was a surprise hit, called a "wickedly enjoyable read" by *Utne Reader*, and garnering a rave Editor's Choice review in *Factsheet Five*. Select articles were handpicked by *Playboy* advisor Chip Rowe for his anthology *The Book of Zines* (Owl/Henry Holt, 1997).

Most notably, *Heinous* gained praise for its extensive coverage of motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel, which Steve expanded into *Evel Incarnate:The Life and Legend of Evel Knievel* (Macmillan, 2000). The definitive biography of the fallen 1970s icon garnered an Editor's Choice citation by Amazon.co.uk, and in 2004 was adapted into a film biography by Mel Gibson's Icon Productions for Turner Network Television. In 2005 he was credited as a "Daredevil Consultant/Historian" for the History Channel documentary *Absolute Evel: The Evel Knievel Story*, and in 2006 he was interviewed on the CMT program *True Grit: Evel Knievel*. Upon Knievel's passing in 2007, Steve wrote an obituary for Slate.com.

Steve lives in his hometown of Seattle, where he earned a journalism degree from the University of Washington. His work has also appeared in various other fanzines, local newspapers and blogs, and such books as *Bubblegum Music is the Naked Truth* (Feral House, 2001). He continues freelance writing and maintaining his personal blog while managing an indie video store and pondering his next book project.

PIN–UP
As easy as it is to fawn over architecture and design, magazines that cover these fields can often leave you cold. Since its launch in Fall 2006, *PIN–UP* has been shaking up the genre with a fun, captivating view into design's back room. Courageously individual over clean and predictable, *PIN–UP* features smart, in-depth profiles and candid interviews with leading personalities from the architecture, art, and design world, photo stories by leading photographers and thought-provoking essays—all without ever taking itself too seriously. Cutting edge design by award-winning art directors and a smart crossover sensibility make it a sophisticated one-stop design culture magazine. In short, *PIN–UP* is pure architectural entertainment.

FELIX BURRICHTER
As the editor and creative director of *PIN–UP*, Felix Burrichter has a BA in architecture from Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture and a master's degree from Columbia University. He has practiced for a number of years as an architect in Paris and in New York, collaborating with artists such as Dirk Skreber, Marcelo Krasilcic, and Julika Rudelius. He regularly writes for *T New York Times Style magazine* and *Fantastic Man*. He is also the co-editor of *BUTT* magazine.

PIERRE ALEXANDRE DE LOOZ
PIN–UP's editor-at-large, architect, and writer Pierre Alexandre de Looz, is also one of the magazine's founding fathers, together with Felix Burrichter. He holds a BA from Yale and a master's degree from Columbia University in architecture. Besides practicing with the design firm Mesh Architectures in New York, he has contributed to *Tokion*, *ArtInfo Design*, *Yale Constructs*, and *306090*, and recently became New York contributing editor for Berlin-based *032c* magazine.

DYLAN FRACARETA
As *PIN–UP*'s art director, Dylan Fracareta (together with Geoffrey Han) is responsible for the overall visual language of the magazine. After spending his formative years in Amsterdam, where he co-founded the design studio 178 Aardige Ontwerpers, he graduated in 2006 from the MFA program at Yale. In 2008, he began an independent design practice, which focuses on publications and printed matter for the cultural arena. He is also an adjunct professor in Graphic Design at Fordham University and CUNY City College in New York.

GEOFFREY HAN
PIN–UP art director Geoffrey Han is a graphic designer who works primarily on books, publications, and printed matter for the cultural sector in collaboration with artists, curators, architects and designers. Since graduating from Yale University in 2006 with an MFA in graphic design he has collaborated with Creative Time, SANAA, the Princeton School of Architecture, and JRP Ringier Christoph Keller Editions. He is Assistant Professor in Graphic Design at CUNY City College.

SHADOWS & STRAWS
Recently, while completing his Master of Architecture thesis at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Bryan Boyer channeled his interest in design, democracy, and communication towards the writing and publication of *Shadows & Straws*, a broadsheet newspaper detailing the history of the US Congress as a thing in space. Addressing both the institution's history and the architectural development of its permanent home, the US Capitol, *Shadows & Straws* was printed in a run of 600 in Cambridge, MA and distributed to interested architects, critics, and friends around the world.

BRYAN BOYER
Bryan Boyer is an international couch surfer and design consultant. In addition to a small freelance design practice he is currently working with Sitra, a semi-autonomous government organization that reports to the Finnish Parliament, where he is a strategic design consultant focusing on the fuzzy edges of architecture. What happens when you embed designers—with their unique blend of tools, tactics, strategies, and aesthetics—inside the machinery of government? Finland wants to know, and believes that strategic design thinking will play an important part in working through society's most difficult, messy problems (like climate change). Boyer is helping to define how this will happen.

SITUATED TECHNOLOGIES PAMPHLETS
The *Situated Technologies Pamphlets* series extends a discourse initiated in the summer of 2006 by a three-month-long discussion on the Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC) mailing list, which culminated in the Architecture and Situated Technologies symposium at the Urban Center and Eyebeam in New York that October, co-produced by the Center for Virtual Architecture, the Architectural League of New York, and the iDC.

The series aims to explore the implications of ubiquitous computing for architecture and urbanism: How are our experience of the city and the choices we make in it affected by mobile communications, pervasive media, ambient informatics, and other "situated" technologies? How will the ability to design increasingly responsive environments alter the ways we conceive of space? What do architects need to know about urban computing, and what do technologists need to know about cities? How are these issues themselves situated within larger social, cultural, environmental, and political concerns?

Published three times a year over three years, the series is structured as a succession of nine conversations between researchers, writers and other practitioners of architecture, art, philosophy of technology, comparative media study, performance studies, and engineering. It takes on the urgent and ambitious task of exploring the implications of emerging technologies and their intersection with daily life.

Such a rapid insertion of texts into discourse is rarely witnessed within the context of traditional US publishing, which often requires years to go from manuscript to distribution of the printed book. We feel strongly that the discussion about situated technologies cannot be postponed that long. At the same time, we acknowledge that the subject is itself a moving target, as these technologies continue to evolve rapidly. Given these considerations, we've opted to publish the series using print on demand (POD) technology. Widely used but still little known, this publishing technique allows fast turnaround of books that can be ordered through online bookstores and are indistinguishable from many books in your bookshelf.

MARK SHEPARD
Mark Shepard is an artist, architect, and researcher whose post-disciplinary practice addresses new social spaces and signifying structures of contemporary network cultures. His current research investigates the implications of mobile and pervasive media, communication and information technologies for architecture and urbanism.

Recent work includes the Tactical Sound Garden [TSG], an open source software platform for cultivating virtual sound gardens in urban public space. It has been presented at museums, festivals and arts events internationally, including the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, Maryland; Conflux 2006, Brooklyn, New York; ISEA 2006, San Jose, California; SIGGRAPH 2007, San Diego, California; Futuresonic, Manchester, UK; Sonar Festival, Barcelona, Spain; The Electronic Language International Festival— ILE 2007, São Paolo, Brazil; and the Arte.Mov Festival for Mobile Media, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

In 2006 he organized Architecture and Situated Technologies (with Omar Khan and Trebor Scholz), a 3-day symposium bringing together researchers and practitioners from art, architecture, technology and sociology to explore the emerging role of "situated" technologies in the design and inhabitation of the contemporary city.

He is co-editor of the *Situated Technologies Pamphlets* series, published by the Architectural League of New York and co-author of *Urban Computing and its Discontents* with Adam Greenfield. Other publications include "Tactical Sound Garden [TSG] Toolkit," in *306090* v.9, *Regarding Public Space*, published by Princeton Architectural Press; "Situating the Device" and "working title: Industrian Pilz," in *Shark*, a Journal of Poetics and Art Criticism, v.1 and 2; and "Extreme Informatics: Toward the De-saturated City" in *Urban Informatics: The Practice and Promise of the Real-time City*.

Mark received an MS in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University; an MFA in Combined Media from Hunter College, City University of New York; and a BArch from Cornell University. He is an Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, where he holds a joint appointment in the departments of Architecture and Media Study, and coordinates the media | architecture | computing MArch+MFA dual degree program. He is currently a visiting researcher with the Netlab at Studio-X, a studio for design and research run by the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation of Columbia University.

OMAR KHAN
Omar Khan is an architect whose work spans the disciplines of architecture, installation/performance art and digital media. His research and interests deal with responsiveness and performativity in architecture. In 1995 in collaboration with Laura Garofalo he established Liminal Projects, a practice that has developed performance spaces for video artists, dancers and musicians, gallery installations, domestic interiors and award winning competitions. Their work has been exhibited at The Kitchen, NYC; The Whitney Annex, NYC; The Urban Center, NYC; The Storefront for Art and Architecture, NYC and The National Building Museum, Washington DC among others. They were winners in the Architectural League of New York's Young Architects Forum 1999. Omar is a co-director of the Center for Virtual Architecture at SUNY Buffalo. His current research projects include Machine Vision for Responsive Architecture and Variable Materials: Composite Elastomers. Omar received his BArch from Cornell University and SMArch from MIT. He was a member of the Aesthetics and Computation Group at the MIT Media Lab.

TREBOR SCHOLZ
Trebor Scholz is as an artist, media theorist, activist, and organizer. His interests focus on media theory, networked sociality and education. In 2004 Scholz founded the Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC). Scholz has facilitated several large-scale conferences such as Share Share Widely, Free Cooperation and Kosovo: Carnival in the Eye of the Storm. His collaborative and individual works have been exhibited at the Venice Biennial, the Sao Paulo Biennial and many other venues. Selected presentations included the Tate Gallery (London), ISEA (Helsinki, Tallin, San Jose), MAAP (Singapore), PS1, FILE (Sao Paolo), Stanford University, N5M (NYU and Amsterdam) and UCLA. Scholz has written on participatory cultures, new media education and activism for many periodicals such as Art Journal, FibreCulture Journal, Afterimage, and C-Theory. He is co-editor of the forthcoming book *Free Cooperation: The Art of (Online) Collaboration*. Scholz is currently research fellow at the School of Art and Design (Zurich, Switzerland) as well as a professor and researcher at SUNY, Buffalo.

SUMOSCRAPER: A CULTURAL CONTENT CONTAINER
In the contemporary metropolis, cultural content has long since replaced industrial content as cities have sought to re-invent themselves as generators of culture. "Culture" in the age of digital networks has become synonymous with the ephemeral, the fleeting, and the vague, as new tides of content wash over the vast shore of the World Wide Web.

In a world where design is ubiquitous, design no longer matters.

Sumoscraper is the solution to this problem. Its impending presence in cities everywhere is an approaching manifestation of stylistic ambivalence, marking a rejection of the unique. It gains relevancy within planning circles by shear functionality, not by aesthetic presence or stylistic affect. It is completely democratic, in that it gathers the masses rather than dispersing them through aesthetic preference. It recognizes that beauty lies in the operations of daily life, not in the pursuit of stylistic relevancy.

The *Sumoscraper* is not architecture; it is infrastructure.

In the contemporary city, infrastructure matters more than buildings. As web content usurps physical content, the glamour of physical architecture fades. *Sumoscraper* inevitably fills the void left by the demise of aesthetics because it provides a solution, rather than a distraction from architectures ultimate conundrum: the human condition.

JOHN SOUTHERN
John Southern is the director of Urban Operations, a research and design studio based in the Los Angeles, California. A graduate of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) and a licensed architect, John balances his practice with academia by teaching architectural theory and design studio at Woodbury University in Los Angeles. He is a west coast contributor to tropolism.com, *loud paper*, and *Form* magazine—publications specializing in the field of urban culture and design. His recent projects include *Ukendt: Igloo*, in collaboration with the artspace Materials & Applications and Danish artist Anja Franke, as well as a hillside design-build project in Los Angeles. John is also the founder of drowninginculture.com—an ever-expanding archive of design, art, music, and metropolitan culture.

THUMB PAMPHLETS
This series of occasional pamphlets will present projects, interviews, statements, visual essays, dossiers, bibliographies, questionnaires, manifestos, drawings, and experiments presented for wide consideration. Format and production will depend upon prevailing conditions and necessities.

We are interested in broad tastes (this and this and this and....) Accordingly, we will sample from a range of topics. While our particular backgrounds indicate a certain affinity with architecture and urbanism, we strive for an apophenic state, where one identifies connections at every turn, even among the most disparate of things.

THUMB
Thumb is a graphic design office that works on public, private, and self-initiated projects, usually in the areas of architecture, art, design, and culture. Thumb was established in New York as an independent office in 2004. Founding members are Luke Bulman and Jessica Young.

KAZYS VARNELIS (MODERATOR)
Kazys Varnelis is the Director of the Network Architecture Lab at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. In addition to directing the Netlab and conducting research, he is on the architecture faculty at Columbia and teaches studios and seminars in history, theory, and research.

Varnelis is a co-founder of the conceptual architecture/media group AUDC, which published *Blue Monday: Absurd Realities and Natural Histories* in 2007 and has exhibited widely in places such as High Desert Test Sites. He is editor of the *Infrastructural City, Networked Ecologies in Los Angeles*; *Networked Publics*, and *The Philip Johnson Tapes: Interviews with Robert A. M. Stern*. He has also worked with the Center for Land Use Interpretation, for which he produced the pamphlet *Points of Interest in the Owens Valley*.

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DEDICATED TO INCREASING THE VOLUME OF ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4

LISA CHOLMONDELEY **CHASING LE CORBUSIER BOOK REVIEW**

The Le Corbusier Guide by Deborah Gans Princeton Architectural Press Revised Edition, 2000

Architects are not ideal travel companions.

We are notorious for dragging companions to see obscure buildings by yet another really important architect. Travel is not so much immersion in a place, but an opportunity to add another notch on our belts of architectural must-sees. It is in this culture that *The Le Corbusier Guide* by Deborah Gans seems to offer a readymade global itinerary of one of the twentieth century's most important architects. Explicitly travel guide and not monograph, the book aims to celebrate the authentic insight gained through travel and direct experience. There are travel books that focus on food, music, religion, literature, and even bathroom locations, but as a travel guide dedicated to the work of just one architect, it is unique.

But this is not for the armchair architect, despite the helpful glossary of Corbusian terms. True to its title, *The Le Corbusier Guide* covers all of Corbusier's built work and is organized geographically. The book begins with a thorough essay introducing his ideas and biography. Each entry consists of photographs and text outlining the building and environs. The addition of address and visiting information is the wink towards the traveler.

Finding Corb's work in Europe is arguably a more accessible adventure; there, good maps and a monograph will take you far. Corbusier's *oeuvre* in Europe does not suffer from a lack of exposure, and so it was on a trip through India that I hoped the book would prove its worth.

Chandigarh was first. I arrived, guide in hand.

A rickshaw ride provided a sense of the city's organization and Corbusier's modern master plan. My interest in the bus station or dilapidated shopping blocks solicited stares, but nothing too hard to handle. There were other Corbusier buildings to see, a yacht club, museums, and college buildings, but in the modernist imagination and contemporary Chandigarh, the Capitol Complex looms large. The complex is composed of three main buildings with an open hand sculpture (now the iconic image of the city) located in the plaza between them. Corb intended the platform to represent the citizenry and democracy itself.

But access to the Chandigarh's civic heart proved tricky. First, I needed a special letter from the tourism office to visit the complex. (An important point Gans fails to mention in the guide.) Bureaucracy accomplished, I had my letter. And I was in search of the iconic open space. On the first attempt I couldn't find the entrance to the Secretariat or the open hand. On the second attempt I saw the Assembly and had a rooftop tour of the Secretariat with an armed guard, but still no open hand. It was on the roof that the issue became clear.

The open space, as described in the book, is gone. The years since the hopeful creation of Chandigarh have created secure islands within an overgrown wasteland cum parking lot. The open space has lost significance so much that there are now squatters on it. I entered former plaza by crawling through a hole in a fence. The only building that now gives access to the open hand sculpture is the Supreme Court.

As the tallest spot in the complex, the Secretariat roof offers the sort of panoramic view Gans speaks about. The book's description of the expansive horizon and of the many views of the Complex unfolding as you approach, no longer exists. What is there is incredible; it just doesn't match the description.

In the end the *Guide* confused me. I spent so much time looking for the spaces and views in the book and not quite looking at what was there. The book works best as a record of the intentions for the buildings rather than a guide to finding them. In fact, the reconfigured perimeters offer views never addressed in her descriptions. As an easy to carry catalog of Le Corbusier's work, the book it is indispensable. But without *Lonely Planet* or helpful locals I would have never gotten necessary access information. For me a question remains as to this book purpose. It is far too academic for the casual traveler, and somehow too prescriptive and not quite enough information for the eager architect.

JOHN SZOT **AN OPEN LETTER TO BARRY L. KRUGER**

Office of the Inspector General
The Metropolitan Transit Authority
Two Penn Plaza - 5th Floor
New York, New York 10121

Dear Mr. Kruger:

I am writing to bring to your attention a prime opportunity for the Metropolitan Transit Authority to reassume a prominent position within New York City's cultural identity. This is a position the MTA held in its recent history, but under controversial circumstances that made maintaining this position untenable. Since then there, developments suggest yesterday's problems could become today's accolades with very little effort and at great benefit to the MTA and the city at large.

Surely, you recall the 1970s and '80s when graffiti was a serious issue complicating the maintenance of the subway system's trains and tunnels. Although critics denouncing the graffiti-covered cars were in no short supply, the small minority of voices who spoke in defense of the street writers' work predicted a cultural watershed that would bring street culture into a more sophisticated dialogue with the city's arts community. Although their prediction proved accurate, the cultural significance of street writing was severely underestimated. Today, the "destructive fad" that flourished by broadcasting its message across train cars is a globally recognized phenomenon.

The reasons for this evolution are difficult to summarize, but it is clear that street writing has since matured significantly and positively. It now encompasses a wide range of specialties with varying levels of intricacy and technical accomplishment. Because some tags and pieces came to be appreciated for their beauty and social significance, former street writers can now earn a respectable living within the advertising and entertainment industries—some have even drawn upon their prior reputations to become moguls within their fields. The Democratic Party used the work of one former stencil graffitist on official promotional materials in this year's election. Another's designs currently demand eight-figure prices at prestigious auction houses worldwide. And preservationists in London scramble to rescue artworks from anti-graffiti maintenance crews due to the artist's rapidly ascending in the contemporary art market. With supporting counterparts in music and fashion, street writing has become an integral part of a multi-billion dollar industry that brands products ranging from soft drinks to luxury housing.

Considering these developments, it is likely that the MTA's historic role in the evolution of street writing now holds significant political and economic value. New York City emerged from the mid-1980s as a pop-culture flashpoint thanks to the efforts of those who antagonized your organization for over a decade. By way of the MTA, street writing became a facet of New York City's history. Despite being largely graffiti-free for almost 20 years, the graffiti-covered subway car is still an internationally recognized icon that constitutes part of New York's civic identity.

Reestablishing a strong relationship between the New York subway and graffiti could provide the MTA with the means for recovering its costly investment in street writing's formative years. More importantly, it would allow New York City to reclaim a part of its cultural heritage that has since been exported to every major urban center around the world. Therefore, I propose the MTA reconsider its standing policy of zero-tolerance for graffiti vandalism in favor of a new strategy that would successfully bring the positive aspects of street writing's socio-economic potential into equilibrium with the negative aspects of its anti-social reputation and destructive nature. To be more specific, in the interest of profiting by street writing's rise into mainstream acceptance, the MTA should consider maintaining a pool of graffiti-covered trains in the New York City subway.

Of course, there will be objections to such a proposal and challenges would have to be overcome at different levels. First, there is the practical challenge of maintaining trains that are willingly subjected to the regular abuse of vandals. Second, there is the political challenge presented by the possibility of reigniting public outrage. Finally, there is the inherent paradox of commissioning graffiti for use by the MTA: can sanctioning an act of rebellion preserve the rebellious essence of that action? Is it important that it be preserved in the context of reintroducing street writing to the subway?

The solution to the first problem comes easily from the advances the MTA has already made in the fight to remove graffiti from its trains. Material science has provided us with the ability to make surfaces impervious to the compounds used by street writers. This technology has been thoroughly field-tested and today's trains are virtually graffiti-free thanks in part to their effectiveness. Based on this, it is clear that the MTA could easily alter the design of its subway cars such that the configuration of graffiti-resistant surfaces supports a policy of control rather than elimination. A train car's exterior protection could be reduced to only those surfaces critical to the train's operation and physical comfort of its riders. The interiors and windows would remain vandal-proof in order to relieve passengers of the uncomfortable prospect of riding a train without views to the exterior or a clean place to sit. Any remaining surfaces would allow paints and pigments to permanently adhere. After being painted, only a few simple steps would be necessary to clean a car's protected surfaces and render it fit for service. Extra expenses incurred from graffiti management could be recovered over time through initiating relationships with contemporary art dealers: cars due for retirement could be sold at open auction as cultural artifacts. Those exhibiting the work of writers that have since risen to prominence would fetch premium rates, and the MTA would gain valuable prestige as a resource for the international art market.

Regarding negative public reactions to subway graffiti, past reports suggest psychological discomfort was the other primary motivation behind the anti-graffiti movement of the 1980s. For some, the apocalyptic appearance of the vandalized subway trains predicted a dismal outcome to the economic downturn of the early 1970s. For others, it was the helplessness associated with being surrounded by an unfamiliar pattern of communication belonging to a foreign and possibly hostile point of view. Both arguments were rooted in the concurrent social climate: the outsider status of graffiti conflated with New York's poor financial outlook to make street writers the poster children for the city's apparent slide into a state of lawlessness. Despite lacking evidence of a direct connection between subway vandalism and the municipal crime rate, this view was supported by media outlets nationwide. Their willingness to portray New York as the apotheosis of America's urban problems catered to the general discontent bred by economic decline. Graffiti's high visibility and lower-class origin made it a convenient target for journalists probing New York's financial woes. Graffiti may still be controversial, but it is no longer marginalized as the voice of the urban ghetto. Combined with an effective policy of control, it is likely that street writing could return to the subway system today without risk of mobilizing another major anti-graffiti campaign.

However, it is not realistic to assume everyone will embrace the reemergence of street writing on subway cars. There will certainly be those who think the trains are best kept clean and others who feel the artists chosen to perform such work should be formally vetted. In anticipation of such objections it may be possible to secure public approval by regulating the process of painting the trains, but this raises the difficult issue of curatorial responsibility: how will the MTA decide who is allowed to paint train cars and who is not?

As it turns out, such questions are counterproductive with regards to our subject matter. Regulating vandalism is an absurd concept. An agreement established between the MTA and the street writers would not produce the authentic product needed for the success of this proposal. This is because the cultural significance of street writing lies within the social tension it cultivates.

At the social level, street writing is communication between members of an exclusive community of practitioners. The members of this community are motivated by the prestige awarded to those that can successfully evade authority and broadcast their message. Conflict between the street writers' agenda and the disapproving general public preserves the value of the street writers' objective. On the other side of this conflict is the general public that cannot fully understand the meaning of the graffiti it witnesses. Nor can it recognize the value of the prestige-based economy in which the street writers trade because this economy is based on transgressing social norms. From the public's point of view, "the graffiti problem" is an urban phenomenon perpetrated by a faceless subculture operating outside laws it has established and according to priorities it does not share. Through this gap in understanding, each party justifies their actions by objectifying the other: the street writers battle the city in the struggle to make their voices heard, and the general public treats graffiti as the residual product of the city's inseparable matrix of manifold social relationships. Neither can afford to adopt a sympathetic view of the other lest the integrity of their own social domain be compromised. So each becomes a part of the other's definition of the city, and graffiti is the point at which they intersect. Only street writing generated under these conditions can retain its cultural currency.

Therefore, the key to success in this endeavor is conspiracy, not patronage. Clearly, the MTA is unable to go public with a graffiti-tolerant policy, so it must dare to engage in a measured struggle on two fronts in order to secure its investment. The street writers must continue to face the challenge of painting trains under hostile circumstances. Meanwhile, the public cannot be placated by policies that regulate or justify the activity of the street writers. Both must remain ignorant of any complicity on the part of the MTA in order to maintain the delicate ecology of obligatory social tension.

It is important to remember that cultural development always faces conservative opposition. This is a proposal that unreservedly puts said development ahead of the immediate demands of the MTA's ridership. The formula for success in this case requires there be friction, but all change requires sacrifice. Bearing the criticism of a limited constituency seems a small price to pay for broader cultural influence and enlightenment. Does the MTA have the visionary leadership necessary to implement a clandestine policy of dynamic social exchange? Does it possess the initiative to manage some operational and political inconvenience in order to make great social and cultural gains? The purpose of this proposal is to return to New York its rightful claim to the heritage of street writing. Successfully reestablishing one the most provocative artistic movements in history would be a tremendous achievement for the city and for the MTA. As I mentioned earlier, New York is still revered for cultivating this aspect of urban culture, but the mantle of authority cannot be kept perpetually without participation. It is my hope that your organization will act upon this limited opportunity.

If you need to talk about this, give me a shout.

Yours Truly,
John Szot

GAVIN BROWNING **ON FURTHER EXAMINATION: *LOUD PAPER* INTERVIEWS ASTRA TAYLOR**

In Astra Taylor's documentary *Examined Life* (and accompanying book of transcripts, from The New Press), some of the best minds of a generation navigate urban and philosophical terrains: Avital Ronell crisscrosses Tompkins Square Park, Slavoj Zizek rummages through a London garbage dump, and Martha Nussbaum strolls the Chicago waterfront. Gavin Browning and Astra Taylor recently stood still to discuss this project, at Manhattan's Studio-X.

loudpaper Let's talk about representing philosophical ideas on film. Philosophers are known for their ideas rather than their appearances. This film gives a face to their thoughts—their actual faces.
Astra Taylor Yes, it's interesting because these people are incredibly well known, at least in some circles, and yet you couldn't put their faces on the poster. Nobody recognizes them. It's their name, their written words, that has power.

LP So, part of representing their ideas is representing them?
AT Yeah. I suppose that the film does feed into a basic human curiosity: who is the person behind the reputation? I'm obviously attracted to, but also ambivalent towards, that fascination. I show the philosopher—the embodied philosopher—yet I'm don't delve into their biography or their personal lives. You only glean those details from the moments they happened to offer on the walk. I purposefully avoided asking them where they grew up, where they went to school, how many books they've published, what they had for breakfast. Instead, I'm interested in the way ideas are necessarily embodied, how they come from people. Ideas may be abstract, but they're also concrete, they're also lived, they're also embodied in a person who moves through space and time.

LP You're also representing ideas within different environments—what does this add?
AT Hopefully it adds different levels. In documentary films, there's a very, in my opinion, cliché emphasis on story in three acts. I'm not against story per se, but I'm much more interested in structure than story. By structure, I mean some sort of formal device or architecture of the film that provides it with an organizational logic. I've always preferred films that are somehow divided into vignettes, or that have a thematic unity, as opposed to a chronological narrative. So, in this film even though I have characters, they're constrained and defined within the architecture of the film—these vignettes, these walks, the spaces they are moving in.

From the beginning, I really wanted the environment to be the second character in each scene. So there's the subject—the philosopher—but the environment can't just be passive. The environment has to be an active environment, because that's what I'm trying to reveal. I'm trying to show that the space around us is always active: it frames us and provokes us, and makes us feel certain things and have certain responses. So for me the environment being distinct and also, well, intruding on the scene is really important. The intrusion on the scene happens in different ways: sometimes we'll pass by something that catches the philosopher's eye, sometimes somebody in the space comes and talks to us, or sometimes it's simply the fact that the ground is bumpy, which caused us to go in one direction and not the other.

LP How determined were the topics when you went into them, did they change with the scenery?
AT The subjects and I generally settled on a loose theme in advance, something to provide a center to the conversation. Occasionally they would send me a paragraph about what they would like to cover, but there was always room for digression, it wasn't scripted in any way or rehearsed. The conversations were always extemporaneous.

LP In two of the cases [literary critic, feminist, and philosopher Avital Ronell; post-structuralist Judith Butler and painter Sunaura Taylor), we purposefully did not want to prepare at all, or really decide what the conversation was going to be in advance of documenting it. Avital and I also made a pact to somehow incorporate the filmmaking process into the conversation: to do a sort-of self-reflexive sequence.
AT Sunny (Sunaura) and Judith knew that they were going to be speaking on gesture. Judith had said, "There's no way I can do this if I'm not speaking about what I'm doing." That didn't mean she had to do it in an obvious way, but rather that she had to somehow speak about the body if she was moving on the screen. I think she and Sunny found a really interesting way to do that by focusing on interdependence, on the way human beings rely on systems of mutual support.

LP So there's some interplay and relationship between the ideas and the space in which they're discussed?
AT Yes, because I think that's how we experience space everyday. The environment constantly interacts with our state of mind, with our thought processes, with our sense of what's possible or isn't.

LP You situate someone like Ghanaian-American writer and cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah discussing cosmopolitanism in an airport, is that a more obvious choice?
AT Yeah, I think that is more obvious. One thing that salvages it is that it's authentic. He was really there—coming into Toronto to give a talk—so we literally met him at nine in the morning as he was getting off a flight. I think I needed some of the environments to be literal and some of them to be only tangentially connected to the topic at hand. There's actually a mix of more illustrative environments (like the garbage dump for the theme of ecology) and others where the viewer might ask: why this spot?

LP Like what?
AT Michael Hardt [co-author, with Antonio Negri, of the bestselling *Empire*] in a rowboat in Central Park. What does a rowboat have to do with revolution? We found a meaning—in that it became symbolic of an aristocratic pastime, a lifestyle of leisure and pleasure—but that meaning was discovered while we were shooting.

LP Tell me more about that decision.
AT Michael and I had decided early on to discuss revolution. He knew the points he wanted to make, and he was keen to do something interesting. I had filmed for a month in Tijuana, and was quite familiar with the wall that marks the border of US and Mexico, and that was one of the sites we were very excited about possibly using. One of the questions we asked was which side of the wall would we walk on? Would it be painful or patronizing to be on the Mexican side of the wall? Should we be on the US side?

But the timing was impossible, so we thought, okay, maybe an abandoned factory in North Carolina where he lives, because he talks a lot about affective labor and the move towards immaterial production as opposed to the old fashioned production of the kind Marx wrote about.

Again, it was impossible, schedule-wise. Fortunately, he happened to be in New York on the day I was shooting other subjects. I said "Well, where do you like to go? What do you like in New York?" And he said, "I like the Bethesda Fountain. I used to go there all the time when I lived a couple blocks away."

I got permits and we started walking around the park, but I was completely uninspired by the scenery. I suggested we meet again the next day, and that we shoot in one of the rowboats. Michael and I had also briefly discussed filming in Venice where his writing partner, Antonio Negri, lives. So, gondolas had already come to mind; a rowboat wasn't far off.

But while filming we began to wonder, "Why are we here? What are doing on this lake?" And Michael began to feel that it was incongruous to talk about revolution while rowing, which is very much a vacation, leisure activity. We then began to read the environment as symbolic of all this: not only of wealth and privilege, but also pleasure. And, well, how does pleasure relate back to revolution? At the end of the sequence, Michael observes that most of us associate revolution with poverty, with despair, and maybe we should think of revolution as instead as increasing pleasure, increasing leisure, increasing the sort-of beautiful life for everyone. We also began to question our own instinct that to talk about revolution we had to do it in a Third World country. Why exclude the First World from the responsibility to create radical social change; don't we, in fact, have the most responsibility?

LP That an interesting sequence, because the landscape inspires the thought that with revolution, we all have increased access, and we are all better off.
AT Yeah, revolution is not just for the worst-off. We would all benefit from living in a more just, equitable, sustainable world. It made me very happy that we didn't shoot in Tijuana or in a factory, as I don't know if those environments would have triggered such an insight. The sequence is less clichéd as a result.

LP The other thing that struck me about the environments you choose is that they're in not necessarily controlled, but contained spaces.
AT Not always, like when we walk down Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. But we're going in circles in almost all of them.

LP Really?
AT Yeah, which is interesting—in Tompkins Square Park [with Avital Ronell], we're walking in circles! The lake, as you say, the airport, the garbage dump—it's totally true, we're walking in circles in almost every scene! (laughs) Or they just never get anywhere. Avital Ronnell says very early on, "We're on the path that leads nowhere." And that's the path of philosophy: you walk around and around over the same conceptual territory—you go over the same debates again and again, endlessly. (laughs). Even Cornel West, who I drive around Manhattan, seems to randomly get out of the car at the end of his sequence.

LP What's the destination?
AT There's no destination! (laughs) He just goes off into the night, so to me, it's as though he's just continuing the walk even though the camera's off.

LP That's amazing! And you anticipated my next question, which was to ask about the meandering quality of the film.
AT Hmm, well, that's part of why walking is under siege, right?

LP I don't know. Why is walking under siege?
AT For a lot of reasons. The lack of truly public space, issues of accessibility, the fact that our cities and suburbs are designed for cars, because we work too many hours a day too may days a week and are pressured for time, because walking is slow. Think about when someone says they're going for a walk—it typically means they're just going for some air, to clear their head. It doesn't necessarily imply a destination. It isn't purposeful in the sense of having some sort of productive tangible outcome. So...the meandering quality of the film; I really wanted to convey that feeling. I see the movie's main message as: take a break from this instrumental, focused, hyper-productive, efficient mode of existence. Let your mind wander.

JOHN SOUTHERN **BUILDING AS MEDIA: LOUD PAPER INTERVIEWS BARBARA BESTOR**

Architect Barbara Bestor has lived and worked in Los Angeles' Silver Lake neighborhood since 1992, adding houses, and what she modestly calls "local social infrastructure": a coffee shop, a restaurant, and some bits and pieces of stores and restorations. Her 2006 book, *Bohemian Modern: Living in Silver Lake*, is as much a picture book as chronicle of domestic modernism, a heady manifestation of formal experimentation and social progressivism.

Clearly, Barbara has neighborhood cred. With her recent project, a series of billboard on the side of her Fountain Avenue office, she's used art and politics to engage the community. Architect and neighbor John Southern sat down with Barbara to discuss the installation and why she hates murals.

loud paper Before start, let's vet the obvious elephant in the room: what's your take on ducks and decoration? By Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown terms, the building obviously is a decorated shed, but the applied graphics could make it a kind of media-saturated "duck," no? Or, to put it another way, is the building a sign, or is the sign a building?
Barbara Bestor I think the building is a billboard—it has a sign that it hides behind. Actually, it has two signs: the old hair salon sign still brings in a steady stream of people looking to get haircuts. When I got the building, I peeled off the old façade, windows, entry, etc. and built over it as if it were a permanent construction scaffold. That wall was extended on one end, and at the triangle corner I put a mirror glass strip to give the illusion that the wall was independent of the building, or even that the building wasn't actually there at all. Dematerializing is a favorite side project in my projects.

I have always been very interested in Renzo Piano's approach to context, particularly in the de Menil museum and also the block or two of buildings the museum owns and maintains around it. There the wall to the street is articulated as a separate plane, whose purpose is to relate to the street. It is, if I remember correctly, a large billboard of painted wood siding, same height as the local wood frame houses. And it has nothing to do with what is happening behind the wall—a functionalist approach to context. I like that our wall is right in there with the auto body yards and their undifferentiated facades.

LP Many of your projects incorporate graphics on both the interior and exterior surfaces—a kind of graphical interface with the viewer. What made you decide to use the building as a form of graphic media?
BB The main attraction of being situated on a busy street is that we can speak to a much larger audience than your average storefront, particularly if we speak the language of the street. The main cost of the remodel was the extension of the façade across the parking area, which gave us a full 100-foot by 14-foot surface to make big pieces on.
Graphics and supergraphics-wise I am very interested in making things that force acknowledgement of surfaces and textures by exaggerating their potential. I share the "no earth tones" philosophy with the guy who made Miami Vice. Color and pattern are very important for us not as space makers per se, but as space articulators. Differentiating planes, highlighting and punctuating sequences, color is as important as daylight and lighting, but is specific to more complex architectural readings

LP Right now you've got "OBAMA" as the current graphic in response to the presidential election. What typically determines your choice of graphic lexicon and colors for the wall?
BB This one and the last installation (*Red Monster*, an homage to the Red Sox World Series win) are graphics we did in house [by Elinor Nissley and Thea Massouh, respectively]. These are the first written graphics. Before that we had a series of pieces by artists who work in vinyl as their preferred palette, and we were sort of passive curators. I would put it around that I was looking for installation proposals and see who would submit and choose a few. The one standard is that the wall is always red, so the background is consistent from year to year.

LP Los Angeles has been said to be city whose commercial architecture was created for the speed of the automobile. Architectural critic Reyner Banham even immortalized the city through the windshield of his car in his famous documentary, *Rayner Banham Loves Los Angeles*. What determines the speed of your building's façade and how do you see it fitting into the city's car, commerce, and signage love triangle?
BB The Obama mural is an anamorphic graphic. It is designed to be read by a driver on the corner of Hyperion coming down to Fountain. The letters are stretched and tapered so that they read as a projected word from that privileged point of view. Of course, it is still completely legible as you travel along it, but the font is very tweaked. Everything on the wall thus far has been intended to take the form of commercial roadside signage, but to deliver instead a little art snack. Or maybe propaganda snack.

LP How does your wall fit into the context of Silver Lake? Do you see it as a mural, a sign, or as an informational skin?
BB Well I don't really like "murals" as a genre as they seem to imply permanence and are often sentimental. But, it may be accurate to describe it as a project of temporary murals that are sort of urban wallpaper. I have this idea about "domesticating urban space" as a part of our office mission, and I think that this wall participates in and adds maybe a strange beauty to the daily life of the neighborhood and commuters. We keep the wall projects up for at least 4 months, so while they become background for the regulars they still can be discovered by a couple of new people every day.

LP What kind of response have you gotten from the community?

BB People really seem to like it. We have a funny relationship with the junior high kids from across the street and the motorheads from all the garages. When we did our memorial to the gay bathhouses (by Chris Loomis, my favorite one so far) I thought we were going to be tagged like crazy, but it barely got touched. I get random Facebook messages from people sometimes saying that they like driving by. And of course the red sox fans were very, very happy.

LP Last question: do you consider your practice vinyl or MP3?
BB Well, we are fairly vinyl, although I think we apply ourselves in an MP3 way. Most of the advanced communication tools these days are Flickr and Twitter cell phone images. Our billboards are speaking the same language.

I want to write an article called *Complexity and Contradiction in Neo-modern Architecture*. I feel sometimes like we are back in that weird early Venturi era where official avant garde modernism resembles boring corporate product design. Instead, things like craft fairs, painting museums, street art, and little restaurants and bars have more interesting and complicated imagery and products.

I am not particularly crafty myself (i.e. I do not knit or make my own clothes, etc), but I like direct, visceral architecture and architectural effects that can permeate everyday urban experience. I think all buildings are media and they just aren't actually digital.

ON METHOD

Filmmaker Laura Hanna hadn't heard of San Diego's Ted Smith when she was commissioned to make short video about him for the US Pavilion at the 11th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. And little wonder: the reclusive Southern Californian architect doesn't have a website or any publications to advertise his work, and often shies away from public appearances. This unorthodox and self-described "developer-architect" states, "Where the industry is complex, I hope to eliminate voice by acting as many industry players as possible. I want to be the architect and the developer and contractor. Architects are well-trained to make good buildings and cities, and need to know that perhaps they are the main players that will advance alternative goals." Smith's reticence to engage with the media does not stem from lack of opinion; his GoHomes are as much about social activism as they are about personal history as he explains below. For Hanna's full Biennale profile, visit: http://positioningpractice.us

TED SMITH **THE GOHOMES: PERSONAL EXTRAPOLATION, POLITICS AND THE ALTERNATIVE MARKET**

The name GoHome worked for me in 1980. My home was in default, in more than just the banking way. The tensions of the period had broken up my marriage, and my family needed a new kind of place to live. I feel embarrassed to discuss the realities of my personal living situation, and do so only because the particular housing that evolved from the experience was in the beginning for a particular market, single people or in my case, newly single people with children. The designs for the GoHomes are often confused with co-housing. But this particular collective is a different kind all together.

When the GoHomes came about, I was camped out at my office in Sorrento Valley. The office was a Russell Forester design. It was made of 11-foot by 22-foot modules, 8-feet high on one end, and sloping up steeply to 16 feet at the other. The tall end had a full glass wall with a horizontal grid of awning windows.

My son and I built a little bunk for me over there, and the place seemed to have all the space I could possibly use. It was simple. It was comforting in its simplicity, and it was a much-needed place to "go home". My wife and I had a vacant lot down the hill with an $800 per month payment. We had purchased it a year earlier, already feeling the coming financial collapse. I had tried to design a million houses on the site where all would be well. Perhaps this new place with its imagined family commitment to modesty would hold everything together. We would sell our home and move into a free and clear place paid for with our huge equity. Just before the collapse of 1980, real estate had gotten pretty pricy and my wife and I thought we had a small fortune in the increased value of our house. As it turned out, events moved more quickly than was expected. There was no huge equity, and worse there was not even any paying work. The house was mortgaged up.

Now, a couple years later, I wasn't going to be able to make the land payment either, and needed to do something fast. I needed to solve my somewhat redefined program for designing a house on the site. I started to think about a project of little spaces like my new home office. Individual units, a number of which could add up to make a house, one for each person. Maybe one module would be plenty, for someone? So picture the lonely and broke thirty-two year old architect sitting there in that Russell Forester building with no work, overlaying photographs with tracing paper sketches, trying to believe that a space that size was viable. After all, it was only 242 square feet, tall but tiny. I was sure people would pay three hundred fifty dollars a month for such a space. Perhaps it could be built for $10,000 or less. It would have nothing but what's necessary: a roof, four walls and some windows, minimum plumbing and plugs. Cheap housing was a product I needed at a personal level. This was no abstract notion of what was good for the ideal spec house, for the ideal spec couple in the $200,000 range. This was a real direct understanding of a need. I knew about my need to find cheap housing fast before our home was gone to foreclosure. I knew I was broke. I didn't need to guess what the market wanted. We were it.

In years to come I would explain the meaning behind the name in more general terms, "The GoHome is about getting back to basics. It's about going to a simple, more peaceful place. It is the opposite of the expanding American Dream. It is the proper accommodation for the nontraditional family." What I often present as an academic pursuit was of course as much a search for my own personal housing needs. Which brings me to the major discovery mined at the GoHomes. And why it might be oaky to extrapolate from one's own situation when preparing a lecture or planning a building. I am not alone. I needed to figure out the perfect living accommodations for my son, his mom, and her boyfriend. I needed to stop by freely without butting in. The house had to be cheap. This house would have to have a private front door to my son's room so that I could continue an informal relationship.

There are enough people like me that need alternative housing combinations. There are plenty of people at the fringe of the so-called market who want some other kind of place. At least there are enough to support a few rogue developers. The little colony of houses was the first of a string of GoHomes, although not the most conceptually pure. There were a lot of people who liked the idea of a cheap loft at the beach and we spent the better part of the next six years building more for our friends. The story of these years is one of intrigue and politics. It is a story of partnerships in crisis and small triumphs over evil. It is the story of the system's compromise with the individual and the story of alliances and lost faith.

As it turned out, as many people didn't like the GoHomes as liked them, they became the focus of a mayoral candidate's efforts to organize our neighborhood. Of course the legality of the GoHomes is somewhat borderline. It seems a State court ruling in Santa Barbara where a house had been rented to a gang of college students was said to be a legal use since the gang alleged to be a family and was thus allowed to inhabit the single family zone. This non-blood related family definition actually turned the whole single-family zoning ordinance on its ear. What was a unit, if the family could be any strange combination of individuals? All the parking ordinances, all the density calculations, all the agreements and belief in the single family home were now in jeopardy. In a way the GoHome was an affront to the moral majority. The GoHomes were the embodiment of chaos in a well-defined suburban scene. The enterprising mayoral candidate had found a gold mine in opposing our simple little houses. Soon there were fliers with a picture of our latest project and a caption comparing our houses to the slums of Naples. "Save your neighborhood. Stop these affronts to your property values. Vote Peter Navarro. Stop the Los Angelesification of San Diego. Stop the GoHomes. Stop the sprawl."

I tried to give a slide show to the neighborhood group to explain how the GoHomes were providing housing opportunities to young people, many their sons and daughters. How the GoHomes stopped the sprawl of apartment buildings into the single-family neighborhood by building the only viable "single family" residence on the depressed border properties between the commercial strip and the houses behind, thus stabilizing the eroding edge. How leapfrog up-zoning could not occur beyond the stabilized edge provided by a GoHome on a single-family lot. How this would actually help protect property values. How we were guaranteeing a diverse neighborhood and how we were building a hard edge to the marsh and the commercial strip. How we were building a walkable district. How the GoHomes were a good thing. But Navarro showed up at the back of the presentation and started chanting some kind of slogan and soon the place was out of control. I never have figured a way to present the GoHomes as a kind of one liner. I never could come up with a political slogan that would get the idea across. The campaign went on. We received a stop work order from the city. Seems there had been a complaint as to the legality of our project and the zoning department needed a review. These little buildings were built with partnerships of people who didn't have a lot of money and a stop work order could be catastrophic. Soon there was trouble in the partnership. We needed money for the loan payments and the nearly finished building sat there empty while I tried to figure out what was up with the City. Then some of the partners started questioning the legality of the deal. They refused to make their contribution to the mortgage payment.
What had I gotten them into? They wanted their money back. I had spent their money making the building that now sat unoccupiable. Politics had gotten us.

Was it possible to build a kind of pedestrian density more suitable to the modern California Condition? Weren't the old organizations of cities with downtown cores and peripheral commuters obsolete? Wasn't the future of Urbanism something all together different? The suburbs it seemed to us were the modern reality. But their expanses were (are) too great. The huge unsustainable infrastructure of freeways, extended utility lines, and watered landscape strips coupled with our seeming inability to even consider taxation to pay for the excesses has led to, an immense sprawl of new and running down communities.

The GoHomes were a kind of civil disobedience. They were a protest against one hundred absurdities. I didn't talk much about them after the Navarro incident, although we finished more projects after the crisis. During this period we joked about the GoHomes as stealth architecture. Now the buildings were more clandestine. We learned that a lot of industry players could barely read plans. We learned that a name on the plans didn't really have much to do with any particular use that might be intended. After all it was just people inside no matter what they were up to. We learned to present something bland while we planned something better. It was more expedient to give them what they wanted to see, and then just use it in another manner. So while we continued to see the GoHomes as a jetty against the sprawl, stopping the tide, we stopped telling every one. Although stealth architecture was a successful strategy there wasn't much pride in lurking under the radar. We sold the final GoHome as a regular house and named it The GoneHome.

JENNIFER CATERINO **ARCHITECTS ARE HOTTER THAN REGULAR PEOPLE**

So says the group of the same name that is 12,485 members strong on Facebook.

How much hotter, you ask. Well, with a listed office address of "The left door in the sky, right next to G-d," one can surmise pretty damn hot.

Case in point, in recent weeks, several members have added to a discussion started back in April, the aptly named Reasons to Date an Architect!

The original posting contends, among other things, architects are desirable lovers because finishing early never happens and they work well with groups.

"All night long, all night strong an architects mantra, lol this is funny," one woman writes; another jokes, "ooohhh, we're so damn hot and the best to date."

But it's not all wine and roses for others, as evidenced by another thread that has garnered a lot of comments: If architects are hot, why am I not getting any??

Rest assured, it's just because architects are picky, or so says one South African colleague. Another member, from Australia, thinks the lonely heart poster plain isn't good at marketing.

"Half of being an architect is being good at sales," he writes. "You got to sell it."

Think these architects are narcissists? Hardly. The group, which is open to anyone, lists itself as a philanthropic organization. Missing from the page are the ubiquitous clicks to feed a child, but the founder does explain the philanthropic status in this tongue-in-cheek (we hope) mission statement: As architects we are undeniably superior to regular people, we are also better looking, more interesting and we know stuff about things. Despite this we do not generally distance ourselves from non-architects affording the general public enrichment through our company — evidence of our selfless philanthropy.
Despite the apparent smugness and obvious poor grammar skills of the participating architects, the group somewhat is redeemed by legitimate design-related discussions. But before one can get too engrossed, a rival ad on the side of the page demands attention.

I don't need sex—the school of architecture fucks me all the time also is an open group on the same social networking website.

This group with decidedly less self-esteem boasts a whopping 37,510 members from around the world. The list of "common activities and interests" (which includes such likely unintentional innuendos as "You have the modern mark: a blister in your palm's hand (sic) for the constant use of your mouse") makes it impossible to feel anything but empathy for this sorry bunch.

A quick search reveals another related group: Architects are sexy! With Zaha Hadid's head Photoshopped onto a swimsuit model's body as a profile picture, the group's administrator almost makes a compelling case.

A bit more scrolling reveals its common interest is "beauty," but its description belies the banality of that statement: "You'd be amazed at the fun you can have with masking tape and a hot glue gun stick." Do tell.

Despite a paltry showing of just 810 members, six posted photos seem promising. But with the likes of a (doctored) shirtless Jean Nouvel and (superimposed) beach-frolicking Norman Foster, Architects are Sexy! clearly is a misnomer.

On the other hand, with its plain vanilla name, Facebook's Architects Group tells it like it is. No sexual innuendos are revealed when you browse its 2,980 members. Typos abound on the landing page, as well, but as it is run by an Egyptian architect, even the most egregious ultimately are forgivable.

Less forgivable are the posts themselves. Because the mission of the group is to give architects a forum to post work and receive criticism, the endless self plugs are expected. But then the product reps step in with gauche sales pitches like "How Do I Get Our Clay Roof Tiles Spec'd into Your Projects?"

It's enough to send you back to the desperate arrogance of the hottie group.

Or maybe it just means it's time to log off the computer.

MUSIC REVIEWS

Tussle
Cream Cuts
Smalltown Supersound

In this newest addition to the electro-funk-punk-junk-what-the-hell-is-this set we're greeted with a booty-shakin beat that cascades pile of spaghetti, sublimating all style and genre. After the band's brief collapse in 2007, founders Jonathan Holland (drums and electronics) and Nathan Burazer (electronics) repaired their ranks with Warren Huegel (drums) and Tomonori Yasuda (bass and electronics) resulting in an unstoppable quartet that faintly recalls the buzzing, foot-stomping antics of bands like TransAM and (remotely) Chicks on Speed and Two Lone Swordsmen. Unlike TransAM there is no irony in the nine superbly formed deliveries that make up Cream Cuts and, unlike Chicks On Speed, there are no vocals, only beautifully bumpy, jittery beats that work for both the office and the club.

Slippery "funk-punk" compositions like "Transparent C" and "ABACBA" transpose themselves with silent ripples of sound. The very ambient "Personal Effects" keeps monotony at bay. All too often when a band takes to a certain sound, it sticks, rendering a short shelf life and boring the hell out of both fans and critics alike. Tussle deftly side steps this pitfall with constantly mixed beats and a shape-shifting approach towards modern music. The result is a product that fits no material genre, but pleases all the same. (John Southern)

The Vivian Girls
Vivian Girls
Mauled By Tigers/In the Red

The Brooklyn-based Vivian Girls stole my heart! They bring me back to a seminal point in the Los Angeles music scene around 2002 when the indie boy–dominated bands and the hardcore burnout tuneage of the late nineties were subsumed under a virtual tsunami of feminine yodeling